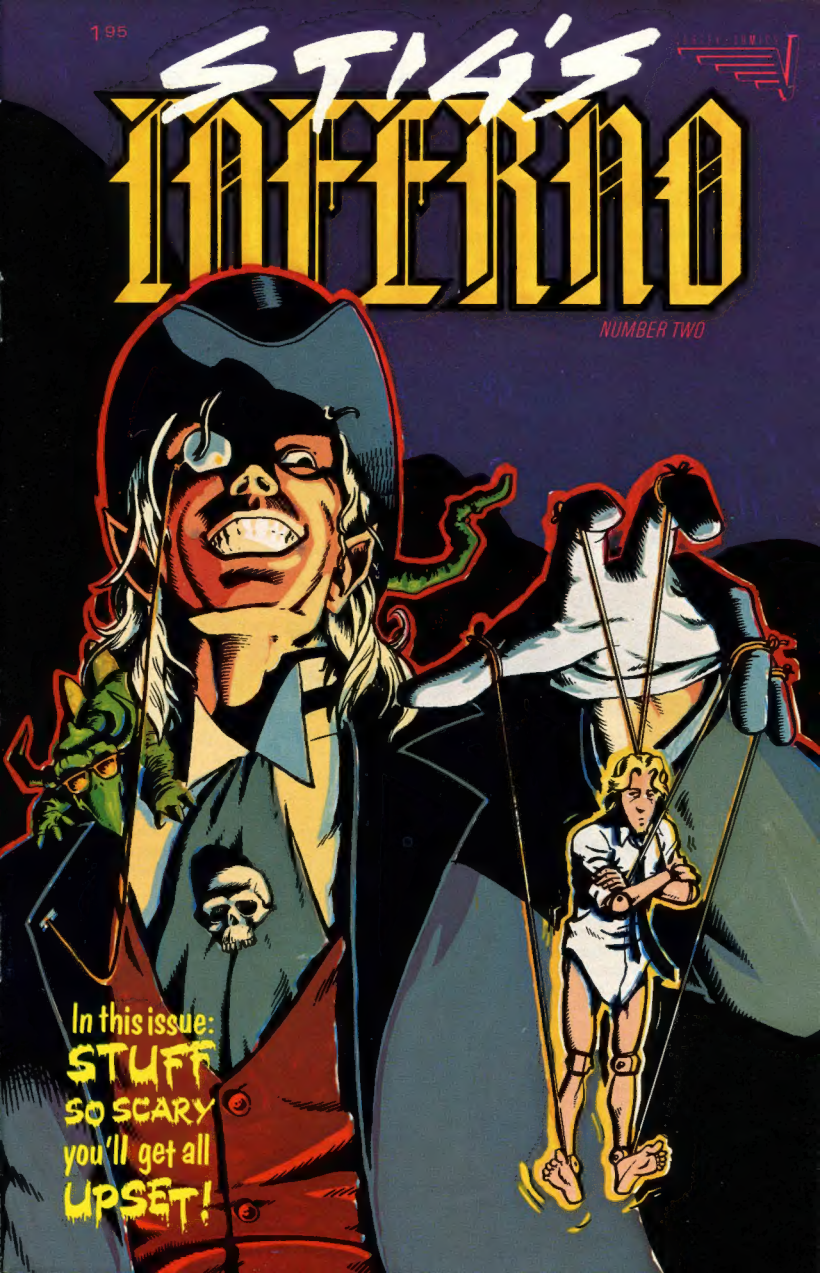
STIG'S INFERNO

NUMBER TWO



E D I T O R I A L

STARTING IN SIXTY DAYS

As soon as you put out a comic book, suddenly everybody's an editor; "Make the story longer... Don't charge so much... Give the Zatons their own Baxter mini-series... Don't slouch and stop chewing with your mouth open."

OK.

There's naught I can do about chewing with my mouth open but the first two suggestions have merit. I, for one, have never liked what this magazine cost and starting next issue that's going to change. Oh, it won't be **half** price or anything quite so magnanimous (we're **still** money-hungry little weasels), but it will be a bit less, as much as we can comfortably manage. Also, the main feature, with Stig, Lord Dis, and those **nasty** old demons, will be longer. Again, this starts in sixty days.

"Well, why the heck didn't you instigate these revolutionary changes right away, chowder-head?" you might ask.

Simply put, I had this entire issue, that you now hold, done before the first one was sent off to the printer, **that's** why! Stop yelling at me.

The page count won't be going up, though, thus the back-up features are losing out, but so what, eh?

AND (this is a big "and " so I underlined it and everything), if sales continue in the vein that they **have** been, within a teensy little while we'll all be finding out what Hell looks like in colour. This is only a rumour though, so don't spread it around. Think of how embarrassing this could be if certain parties should hear of this, especially parties I'm not invited to.

TIPS OF THE HAT AND ALL THAT

Everybody say "Hi" to Klaus. He's the guy who I wrote about last ish who co-created Stig with me a few years back. Well, he was terrific enough to jump in and help with my **first**-ever cover when we ran into a bit of a snag with the colouring. I think the job he did looks just jake, so much so that I might even pay him for it.

While he was colouring the **front** cover he also agreed to give us his views on the nature of Evil which graces the **back** cover, **and** to collaborate on a brand new strip entitled **Kelvin Mace**. More on that later.

It's something of a coup that I could pry Klaus away from the, now mythic, heaving gutfulls of money that he makes doing commercial art, but deep down I think he has the soul of one of us lowly comic people.

In the better late than never department, say "Hi" to Anthony as well. He pencilled that second story this go-round as well as putting inks & tones on a piece last time. All together: "Hello, Mr. Van Bruggen, pleasant day, isn't it?"

TANKS

To all who wrote and entered the Stig look-unlike contest, take heart; we only made fun of a very few of you, but, **boy**, did we receive some of the oddest photos of folks you ever ate! Suspiciously, none of them were in the nude. (Unless you count the animal entries and even then, they were wearing collars.) This is in direct opposition to a clearly stated rule. I stress a nude picture, photographed or drawn, **must** accompany the entry even if it's a houseplant. Some silly people thought we wanted a bunch of polaroids of girls and stuff. Nothing could be further from our minds. No, no, no,... well alright, maybe one or two, but the main thing is in seeing how creatively you get around it. One guy sent us a blank piece of paper, reasoning since he didn't use his real name, he didn't use a real photograph. Great!

We're not announcing the winners until the letters page in the next issue so there's still lots of time to enter. Remember, the five runners-up all receive a subscription to Stig's Inferno and the grand prize winner wins subs to the entire Vortex line (including Mr. X) as well as some original art by me.

Before I go I'd like to say "tanks" to Don Thompson at the Comic Buyer's Guide who gave Stig such nice reviews. If you come over to my house, Don, I'll give you a big wet kiss, deal? Secondly, I'd like to shoot a raspberry to whomever it was in either Comics Feature or Amazing Heroes (I don't remember which, sorry) that said Stig's Inferno was a forthcoming **Sword & Sorcery** title. It's good to know that you can be sure of the information you read in the fan press.

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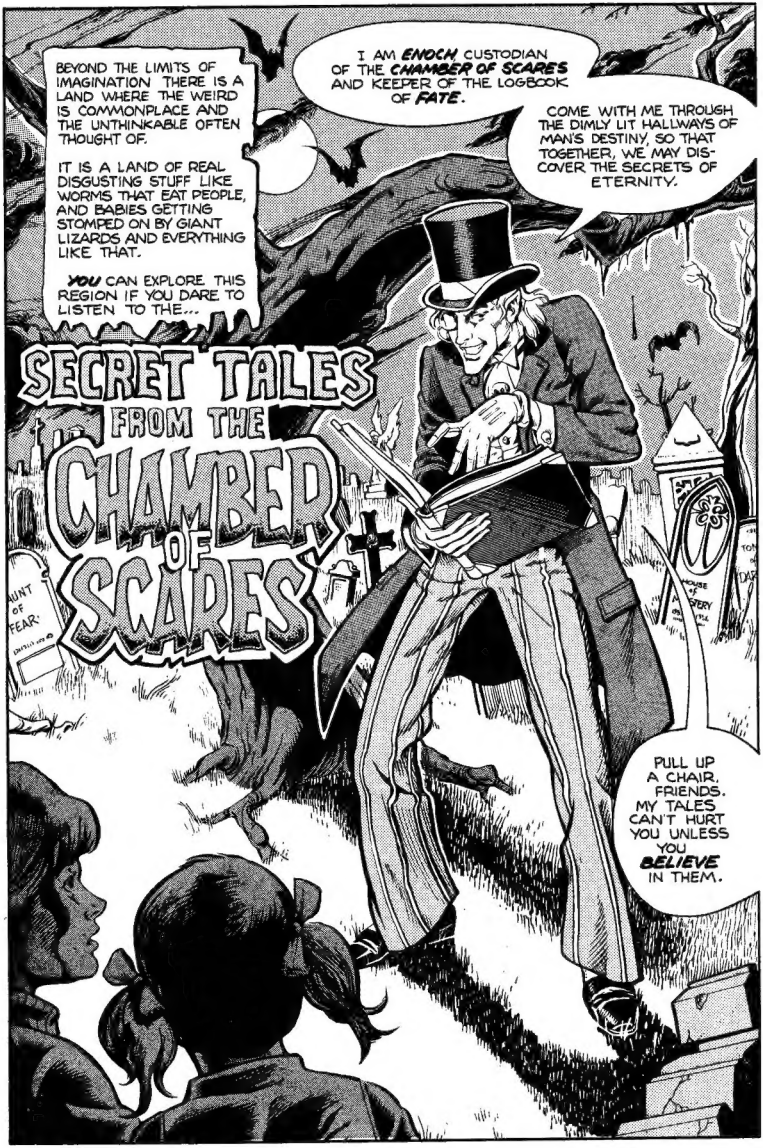
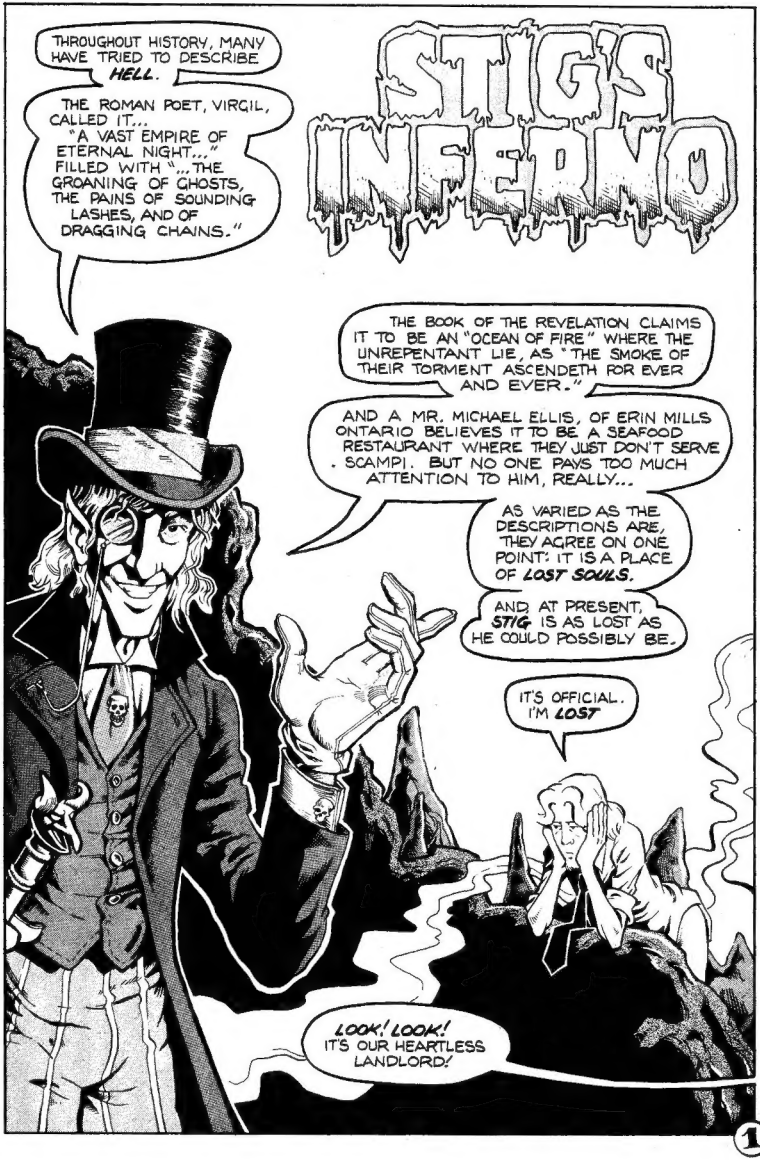

BEYOND THE LIMITS OF IMAGINATION THERE IS A LAND WHERE THE WEIRD IS COMMONPLACE AND THE UNTHINKABLE OFTEN THOUGHT OF.
IT IS A LAND OF REAL DISGUSTING STUFF LIKE WORMS THAT EAT PEOPLE, AND BABIES GETTING STOMPED ON BY GIANT LIZARDS AND EVERYTHING LIKE THAT.
YOU CAN EXPLORE THIS REGION IF YOU DARE TO LISTEN TO THE...
SECRET TALES FROM THE CHAMBER OF SCARES
I AM ENOCH CUSTODIAN OF THE CHAMBER OF SCARES AND KEEPER OF THE LOGBOOK OF FATE.
COME WITH ME THROUGH THE DIMLY LIT HALLWAYS OF MAN'S DESTINY, SO THAT TOGETHER, WE MAY DISCOVER THE SECRETS OF ETERNITY.
PULL UP A CHAIR, FRIENDS. MY TALES CAN'T HURT YOU UNLESS YOU BELIEVE IN THEM.


STIG'S INFERNO
THROUGHOUT HISTORY, MANY HAVE TRIED TO DESCRIBE HELL.
THE ROMAN POET, VIRGIL, CALLED IT... "A VAST EMPIRE OF ETERNAL NIGHT..." FILLED WITH "... THE GROANING OF GHOSTS, THE PAINS OF SOUNDING LASHES, AND OF DRAGGING CHAINS."
THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION CLAIMS IT TO BE AN "OCEAN OF FIRE" WHERE THE UNREPENTANT LIE, AS "THE SMOKE OF THEIR TORMENT ASCENDETH FOR EVER AND EVER."
AND A MR. MICHAEL ELLIS, OF ERIN MILLS ONTARIO BELIEVES IT TO BE A SEAFOOD RESTAURANT WHERE THEY JUST DON'T SERVE SCAMPI. BUT NO ONE PAYS TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO HIM, REALLY...
AS VARIED AS THE DESCRIPTIONS ARE, THEY AGREE ON ONE POINT: IT IS A PLACE OF LOST SOULS.
AND AT PRESENT, STIG IS AS LOST AS HE COULD POSSIBLY BE.
IT'S OFFICIAL. I'M LOST
LOOK! LOOK! IT'S OUR HEARTLESS LANDLORD!

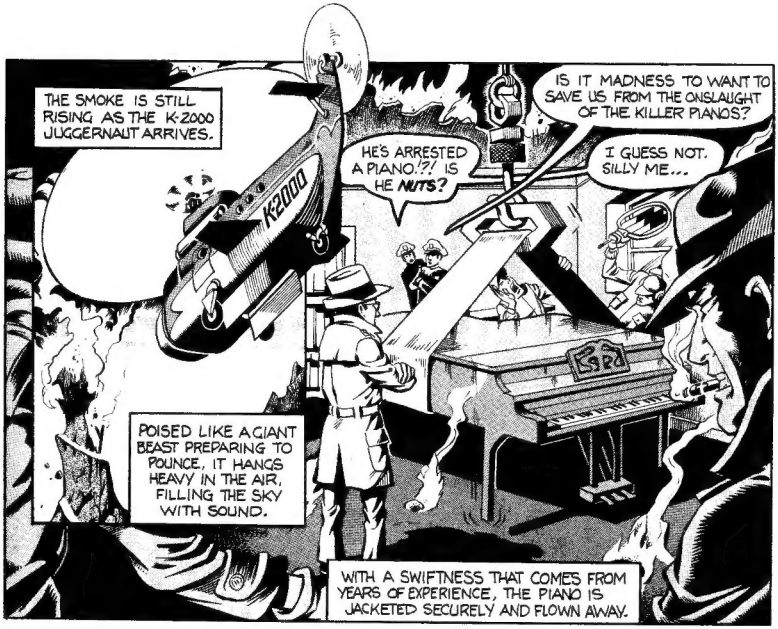
OH NO!! WHERE DID YOU TWO COME FROM?!?
LET'S JUST SAY WE KNOW OUR WAY AROUND...
TERRIFIC LEGS, SAILOR!
YOU KNOW YOUR WAY AROUND?!? CAN YOU GET BACK TO MY PLACE FROM HERE?
WOOOPS! GOT TO GO!
OH MY EARS AND WHISKERS! LOOK HOW LATE IT IS...
NO, WAIT! I JUST WANT TO TALK TO YOU... COME BACK!
MAYBE WE SHOULD TELL HIM, HE SEEMS ANGRY...
KEEP
THINK SO? HOW CAN YOU TELL?
JUST LOOK AT THE BLAZE IN HIS EYES, HE'S FIXATING! TOTALLY OBLIVIOUS TO EVERYTHING.
KEEP WAY
BAD!
GO BACK!
HE PROBABLY HASN'T BOTHERED TO EVEN READ THE SIGNS.
WON'T KNOW ABOUT THE CLIFF THEN, WILL HE?
TIS THE FOLLY OF YOUTH
OH, HECK!
WRONG WAY!
NO KIDDING!
BIG CLIFF
THIS IS IT?
2

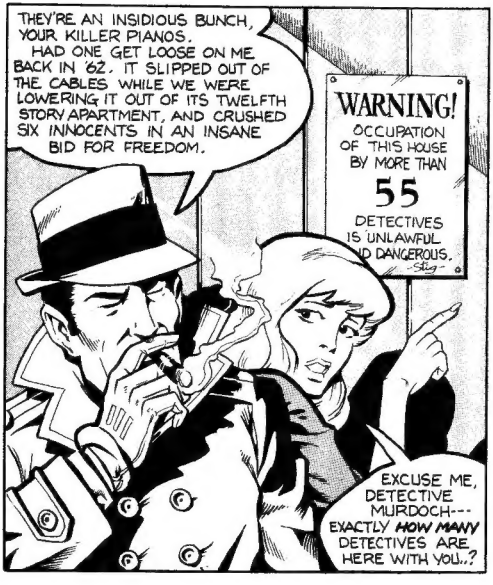
HELLO, YOU'RE PROBABLY A TRIFLE CONFUSED RIGHT NOW IF YOU MISSED LAST ISSUE. SO I'LL ENDEAVOR TO EXPLAIN IT ALL IN THE SPARE MOMENT WE HAVE WHILE STIG... HEH-HEH...
...GETS TO THE BOTTOM OF THINGS.
"PRIMARILY, THE TROUBLE BEGAN WHEN OUR HERO AND HIS DATE, BEATRICE DISCOVERED A PAIR OF UNWANTED GUESTS IN THE PIANO..."
AND THEY AREN'T PAYING RENT, EVEN!!
NYAH-NYAH!
"AFTER A SERIES OF GHASTLY EVENTS AND A HEATED ROW, STIG WAS DECAPITATED WHEN THE LID FELL DOWN ON HIM.
"FOUL PLAY HAS NOT BEEN RULED OUT."
WOW!
"NOW VERY DEAD, STIG. (OR MORE PROPERLY, THE SHADE THAT WAS STIG) AWAKENED IN AN ALIEN LAND, FAR AWAY FROM THE WORLD HE KNEW, AND FARTHER STILL FROM HIS PANTS AND UNDERWEAR."
I WONDER IF THINGS LIKE THIS WOULD HAPPEN IF I HADN'T BROKEN THAT CHAIN-LETTER.
"THERE WERE SOME POLICE INVOLVED, I BELIEVE, AS WELL AS SOME MYSTERIOUS CHARACTERS ON THE FINAL PAGE, BUT THAT'S THE ESSENTIALS ANYWAY."
"THE REST YOU CAN PICK UP ON YOUR OWN."
A CLUE!
TIME'S UP! SORRY FOR INTERRUPTING, BUT I FIND THAT IT ALL RUNS A BIT SMOOTHER IF I CLEAR THINGS UP.
STIG SHOULD BE ARRIVING ANY MOMENT NOW, SO BACK TO THE STORY.

ZOOM!
Down
KRUNCH!
NOTHING'S BROKEN. I GUESS WITH ALL THE PLUMETTING I'VE DONE RECENTLY, I MUST BE GETTING GOOD AT IT...
AT LEAST I MISSED THE ESCALATOR.
ESCALATOR?
THAT MEANS CIVILIZATION! OR A PRIMATIVE FORM OF IT ANYWAYS...
HMM--- THE SIGN SAYS DOWN. I CAN PROBABLY PICK UP A PAIR OF PANTS IN THE BASEMENT SALE.
MAYBE A NICE PAIR OF SHOES...
IN QUIET SILENCE, HE GETS ON WITHOUT A WORD.

FOR LONG MINUTES STIG GLIDES DOWNWARDS, WARMED BY A GENTLE BREEZE FROM BELOW.
VOTE PLUTO for DIRECTOR A MAN WITH A CONCERN FOR PEOPLE.
MORE TIME PASSES. MORE MINUTES...
AN HOUR.
A DAY.
THIS MAY WELL BE THE LONGEST ESCALATOR I'VE EVER BEEN ON.
I CAN FORGET BEING HOME IN TIME FOR THE TWILIGHT ZONE.
KC-THKNG!
IT'S STOPPED.
THAT'S THE LAST STRAW. I'M NOT SHOPPING HERE AGAIN!
THE REPAIR CREW UNDOUBTEDLY TAKES FOREVER TO GET HERE...
ON THE OTHER HAND, PERHAPS THE SQUEAKY WHEEL GETS THE GREASE...
HEY, REPAIRS!
LET'S GET MOVING!
HUP.
VOTE HITLER FOR HALLWAY MONITOR
OVER HERE, GUYS.
LET'S GO!
HUP-HO!
HUP.
C'MON.
BING!
TROUBLE IN SECTOR-14. LET'S SUIT UP!
NOT NOW! I THINK I'M HALFWAY TO A ROYAL FIZZBIN!

I'LL EFFECT REPAIRS, YOU DO THE HEAVY LIFTING...
I DID LIFTING *LAST* TIME. IT'S YOUR TURN.
I'VE GOT LUMBAGO, VOMIT-HEAD! I'M PERMANENT SHIFT-FOREMAN NOW.
SEE? THERE YOU GO! YOU'RE ALWAYS COMPLAINING AND NOW, YOU WENT AND GOT PROMOTED.
IT *HARDLY* MAKES UP FOR THINGS, SCARMIGLIONE, AND YOU *KNOW* IT! AND DON'T THINK I DIDN'T NOTICE YOU'VE GOT NICER *WINGS* THAN I DO...
I'M NOT GOING TO APOLOGIZE FOR SOMETHING THAT'S NOT MY FAULT.
THE DIRECTOR ALWAYS LIKED YOU BETTER ANYWAYS.
"MEANWHILE, AT STIG'S HOUSE, BACK IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING..."
EVERYTHING ALL SET UP?
RIGHT AS RAIN, SIR.
LET 'ER RIP, THEN. IT SHOULD BE A GOOD SHOW.
BAAROOM!


THE SMOKE IS STILL RISING AS THE K-2000 JUGGERNAUT ARRIVES.
K2000
IS IT MADNESS TO WANT TO SAVE US FROM THE ONSLAUGHT OF THE KILLER PIANOS?
I GUESS NOT. SILLY ME...
HE'S ARRESTED A PIANO!?! IS HE NUTS?
POISED LIKE A GIANT BEAST PREPARING TO POUNCE, IT HANGS HEAVY IN THE AIR, FILLING THE SKY WITH SOUND.
WITH A SWIFTNESS THAT COMES FROM YEARS OF EXPERIENCE, THE PIANO IS JACKETED SECURELY AND FLOWN AWAY.


THEY'RE AN INSIDIOUS BUNCH, YOUR KILLER PIANOS. HAD ONE GET LOOSE ON ME BACK IN '62. IT SLIPPED OUT OF THE CABLES WHILE WE WERE LOWERING IT OUT OF ITS TWELFTH STORY APARTMENT, AND CRUSHED SIX INNOCENTS IN AN INSANE BID FOR FREEDOM.
WARNING!
OCCUPATION OF THIS HOUSE BY MORE THAN
55
DETECTIVES IS UNLAWFUL AND DANGEROUS.
-Stig-
EXCUSE ME, DETECTIVE MURDOCH--- EXACTLY HOW MANY DETECTIVES ARE HERE WITH YOU..?

COULDN'T BE MORE THAN SEVENTY I DON'T THINK, EH SERGEANT?
MORE LIKE SEVENTY-FIVE, SIR, YOU'RE FORGETTING THE LOADING CREW.
OH, YEAH.

AT PRESENT, IN A FOUL ROOM, IN A PUTRID TOWER, OVERLOOKING THE REPULSIVE MARSH OF STYX, THE DIRECTOR BROODS...
SIRE? ARE YOU BUSY?
NO, BOB, WHAT IS IT?
JUST CHECKING ON SOME DETAILS FOR THE PARTY.
I'M THROWING A PARTY? HOW-COME?
ATILLA'S 1,578th BIRTHDAY, WE'RE HIRING A BAND AND EVERYTHING. THE WORKS!
OH DEAR. I DIDN'T GET HIM ANYTHING. DO YOU SUPPOSE HE'LL BE CROSS?
I DOUBT IT.
HE MUST BE GETTING USED TO IT BY NOW.
ALL RIGHT, CARRY ON, THEN.
OH! AND SEE ABOUT TURNING UP THE HEAT IN THE SIXTH CIRCLE. I THOUGHT I HEARD A GIGGLE IN THERE THIS YEAR.
WE WILL LEARN MORE OF THIS ENIGMATIC "DIRECTOR" IN FUTURE ISSUES. BUT FOR NOW, (AS IS OFTEN THE PRACTICE) HE SETTLES DOWN TO WATCH HIS MONITOR AFTER DEALING WITH THE AFFAIRS OF STATE.
ARE YOU GUYS THE REPAIR CREW?
BEGONE, INSIGNIFICANT SHADE.
THAT'S NO WAY TO TREAT A PAVING CUSTOMER, FELLA!

I SAID, OUT OF THE WAY!
OW!
THIS LOOKS PROMISING, OPEN 'ER UP!
SKLUNCH!
RIP!
SHOULD YOU BE DOING THAT?
DARN THESE FOREIGN JOBS! NOTHING'S IN THE RIGHT PLACE.
LOOK AT THIS MESS, IT'S WORSE THAN I THOUGHT.
QUICK! HAND ME A TOOL!
LIKE WHAT?
UH--- SEE IF YOU'VE GOT A PAIR OF PLIERS AND SOME CHEESE IN THERE.
HEY.
NOW, IF I CAN PRY OFF THIS HOUSING AND GET THAT CHEESE IN HERE...
I HOPE IT WORKS... IT'S BRIE.
AHA!
VARMINTS!!!
I KNEW IT! THEY GET INTO EVERYTHING!

I GUESS THAT'S *THAT*. BACK TO THE CARD GAME.
NOT SO *FAST*, SMART-GUY. THIS ONE'S NOT SUPPOSED TO BE ON THE ESCALATOR. IT'LL HAVE TO BE REPORTED.
ACTUALLY I AM A BIT LOST...
IF WE TAKE HIM BACK WITH US, THE DIRECTOR'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH HIM.
I'M NOT CARRYING HIM. I WANT TO LOOK NICE FOR THE PARTY AND I WON'T RISK BREAKING A TALON.
DIRECTOR?
YOU DON'T *HAVE* TALONS, YOU GREAT IDIOT, YOU'VE GOT *HOOVES*.
PISH AND TOSH. MY APPEARANCE IS STILL IMPORTANT TO ME.
OK, LET'S GO! BUT I WON'T *FORGET* THIS.
LEAP!
DIRECTOR? IS THIS A MOVIE SET?
YOU GUYS ARE ACTORS, RIGHT?
NOW THAT I'M FOREMAN I CAN PUT YOU ON REPORT Y'KNOW. DON'T THINK I *WON'T*.
THOSE ARE TERRIFIC COSTUMES, YOU TWO. I'D *LOVE* TO MEET THE WARDROBE LADY...

WITH AN EERIE GRACE, THE TWO DEMONIC REPAIRMEN FLY OFF WITH OUR HERO TO AN UNKNOWN DESTINATION...
EXCUSE ME, BUT WHERE ARE WE GOING? I WOULDN'T ASK NORMALLY, BUT MY LEGS ARE AWFULLY COLD.
INTERROGATION, PROBABLY. WE'LL HAVE TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU WERE DOING ON THE ESCALATOR AND WHERE YOU GOT THAT SHIRT
I BOUGHT IT. IT'S MY SHIRT. IT GOES WITH MY LEONARD NIMOY DESIGNER JEANS. WHICH SOMEONE STOLE, BY THE WAY.
THAT'S ANOTHER THING! HOW COME I DON'T GET A SHIRT? CAGNAZZO HAS ONE...
NO HE DOESN'T THAT'S MORE LIKE A FROCK, REALLY.
HANG ON... THIS ISN'T MY SHIRT AFTER ALL.!! IT'S A PIERRE CARDIN!!
SHIRT OR FROCK, IT DOESN'T MATTER. IT'S STILL PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT.
I MEAN EVEN THE SOULS ARE GETTING SHIRTS, NOW. THE SUPPLY DEPARTMENT MUST BE HAVING A GOOD LAUGH AT MY EXPENSE. YOU, TOO, I SUPPOSE.
WHERE'S MY SHIRT?
CALM DOWN BARBARICCIA. IT'S ALL A MISTAKE...
OH GROW UP! IT'S A CONSPIRACY OF SOME SORT... LOUSY WINGS. ILL-FITTING SHOES, NOW THIS ONE HAS A SHIRT
I QUIT!
HEY, LOOK, I'VE BEEN GOOD 'TILL NOW, BUT IF YOU DON'T GET YOUR FINGER OUT OF MY EYE THERE'S GONNA BE A LAWSUIT.

SCARMIGLIONE, AS I HAVE QUIT...YOU ARE ACTING SHIFT COMMANDER TAKE OVER MY CHARGE.
OH, STOP REACTING LIKE A SPOILED CHILD YOU'VE ALREADY DROPPED THE PITCHFORK I GOT YOU LAST CHRISTMAS.
HEY!
SO, NOW I'M A SPOILED CHILD, EH? WELL, WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW WHAT THIS SPOILED CHILD SAYS TO YOU, THEN?!?
I'VE A GOOD MIND TO DO YOU ONE...
KER-SPLASH!
PHAUGH! THIS IS REAL NICE...
OF ALL THE RIVERS THEY HAD TO DROP ME IN, IT'S A WONDER THEY COULDN'T FIND ONE A LITTLE LESS POLLUTED.
I WOULDN'T WISH THIS ONE ON A SHARK.
DIP TREATMENT

HMM-- THERE'S A BONFIRE ON SHORE.
ACTUALLY THERE'S A LOT OF BONFIRES ON SHORE NOW THAT I LOOK. THE CAST AND CREW MUST BE HAVING A BIG CLAMBAKE.
I'LL GO TALK TO THE DIRECTOR HE CAN CALL ME A CAB AND I CAN GET OUT OF HERE.
Y'KNOW, IT FEELS LIKE A MONSTEROUS ALIEN SEA CREATURE JUST GRABBED MY LEG.
THIS MUST BE A SPIELBERG PICTURE.
LOOKS LIKE I WAS RIGHT.
THE STRUGGLE IS AS SHORT AS IT IS VIOLENT, ITS OUTCOME, NEVER IN QUESTION.
SOON, BOTH STIG AND THE YECCHY SLIME-BEAST SLAP THE FOAMING WATER AND DIVE FAR BELOW.
DOESN'T LOOK GOOD FOR OLD STIGSY, DOES IT KIDS? BUT DON'T WORRY, YOU'LL GET TO SEE ALL THE GORY, GRUESOME DETAILS IN THE NEXT INSTALLMENT OF THIS MAGAZINE
THAT'S RIGHT, FEAR FANS, IT'S ONE OF THE TRUE HORRORS OF THE COMICS WORLD... A STORY THAT'S...

...TO BE CONTINUED!!

YOU CALL THAT FRIGHTENING?!? THAT STUNK! JUST A GUY WANDERING AROUND WITH NO PANTS ON. THAT'S ALL.
YOU MOCK MY TALE? YOU DON'T SHIVER IN TREPIDATION OF MY CONTINUING?!?
YOU'VE OBVIOUSLY NEVER BEEN ON THE TTC AT ONE A.M.
WE GO TO INNER CITY SCHOOLS, OLD MAN. WE'RE A LOT HARDER TO SCARE THAN THAT USUAL BUNCH OF WIMPS YOU GET.
I SEE...
PRAY TELL, YOUNG MAN, WHAT DOES SEND SHIVERS UP YOUR SPINE? WHAT KINDS OF GRISLY HORROR?
WELL, YOU DO, FOR A START. HANGING AROUND IN A GRAVEYARD ON THE OFF CHANCE THAT SOME YOUNG CHILDREN MIGHT HAPPEN ALONG, ALL BECAUSE YOU WANT TO SCARE THEM HALF TO DEATH?!?
COME ON...
DO THE POLICE KNOW ABOUT YOU?
YOU WANT SCARY? TRY SOMETHING IN MORE OF A SCIENCE-FICTION VEIN.
PLASMA MONKEYS... THAT KIND OF STUFF.
PLASMA MONKEYS? NEVER HEARD OF THEM.
I ONLY GET TERRIFIED BY STORIES WITH PLASMA MONKEYS IN 'EM, SORRY.
HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THEY ARE... SOME STORYTELLER!
C'MON, LET'S GO OVER TO UNCLE CREEPY'S PLACE.
WAIT A MINUTE, KIDS... YOU SAID PLASMA MONKEYS? I WASN'T SURE. OF COURSE I HAVE SOME HORRIBLE STORIES ABOUT PLASMA MONKEYS TO RECOUNT...
JUST GIVE ME A SECOND AND I'LL TELL YOU A TALE THAT'LL MAKE YOU CRAP RIGHT IN YOUR PANTS.
PLASMA MONKEYS...? WHAT ARE PLASMA MONKEYS ANYWAYS?
I'LL HAVE TO CONCOCT A TALE OF MY OWN...

TRAVELLING ON AN OUTPOST CRUISER ISN'T A LOT OF FUN. I MEAN, ASIDE FROM AN OCCASIONAL ROUSING GAME OF BACKGAMMON, THERE IS NOTHING TO DO. PERHAPS THAT'S WHY THE CREW OF THE FARRAGUT RESPONDED SO QUICKLY TO A HYPER-SPACE DISTRESS SIGNAL FROM THE TINY PLANETOID ZATON IV
TOO BAD THEY WERE UNAWARE OF THE HIDEOUS DANGERS WHICH LURKED THERE.
DANGERS LIKE...
THE PLASMA MONKEYS OF ZATON II!!!*
WHAT KIND OF READING ARE WE GETTING ON THE ATMOSPHERE, MISTER GRANDENETTI?
NOT BAD. A LITTLE TOO MUCH CARBON MONOXIDE TO BE COMFORTABLE BUT NOTHING DEADLY. IF IT'S A CRASH LANDING, THERE'S NO REASON WHY WE COULDN'T EXPECT SURVIVORS.
OK. GET THE LANDING PARTY TOGETHER. WE'LL TAKE SURFACE SHUTTLE-TWO.
FARRAGUT
THIS IS THE ONLY EVIDENCE OF SETTLEMENT ON THE PLANET, BUT I'M NOT GETTING TOO MUCH OF A LIFE READING. NOT HUMAN ANYWAY...
WHATEVER IT WAS THAT CAUSED THESE PEOPLE TO SEND OUT THAT CALL MIGHT STILL BE OUT THERE. BETTER HAVE YOUR LASER-PISTOLS AT THE READY, MEN!
AYE-AYE!
WHAT A MESS! IT LOOKS LIKE A HURRICANE WHIPPED THROUGH THIS CAMP.
OOHHHH!!
CAPTAIN SPALDING! OVER HERE!!
1

*GOOD GOD ANTHONY! WE DIDN'T LEAVE ROOM FOR THE TITLE!! NOW WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO?!?
-TV

IT'S ALRIGHT. I'M A DOCTOR. YOU'RE GOING TO BE FINE.
WHERE ARE THE OTHERS OF YOUR GROUP..?
WHAT HAPPENED TO EVERYBODY?
NO TIME... I AM LOST (GASP!)
BEWARE, MY FRIENDS... ...BEWARE THE PLASMA MONKEYS!!
HE'S DEAD.
WHAT?!? HOW CAN HE BE DEAD?
THERE ISN'T A MARK ON HIM!
I DON'T LIKE THIS...
WHAT WAS THAT HE SAID... SOMETHING ABOUT PLASMA...?
PLASMA MONKEYS. HE SAID, " BEWARE THE PLASMA MONKEYS."
I WANT ANSWERS! I WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON! IS THERE ANYONE LEFT ALIVE IN THIS SETTLEMENT?
NEGATIVE, SIR! NO LIVING HUMAN LIFE FORMS EXCEPT US. I AM GETTING SOMETHING ON THE SCANNER, THOUGH. A SMALL ALIEN CREATURE...
WHAT?!?
WHERE?!?

RIGHT OVER THERE.
STAND BACK! I'LL GET IT!
HOLD YOUR FIRE, MISTER! I'M NOT HAVING ANY SHOOTING UNTILL WE KNOW MORE.
GRANDENETTI, IS IT POSSIBLE THAT THIS THING WHATEVER IT IS, IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISASTER HERE?
I DON'T THINK SO, CAPTAIN. IT'S AWFULLY SMALL AND APPEARS TO BE HARMLESS...
CHEEE!
COME ON OUT. LITTLE FELLA... NO ONE'S GOING TO HURT YOU, COME. HERE, BOY!
HE MUST HAVE BEEN THE COMPANY MASCOT.
IF WE BRING HIM BACK WITH US I CAN CHECK HIM OUT ON BOARD THE FARRAGUT AND SEE IF HE'S ALRIGHT.
THERE'S NOTHING MORE I CAN DO HERE.
OH, HE'S TREMBLING.
POOR LITTLE GUY'S SCARED HALF TO DEATH.
HE'S A CUTE ONE, ISN'T HE?
I JUST WISH I KNEW WHAT THAT GUY MEANT... "BEWARE THE PLASMA MONKEYS!"
IT GIVES ME THE CREEPS!

HOURS LATER, ON BOARD THE SHIP, THE CREW SETTLES DOWN TO A GAME OF BACKGAMMON.
WELL, HE'S HEALTHY, AS NEAR AS I CAN FIGURE IT, MY INSTRUMENTS AREN'T BUILT FOR ALIEN PHYSIOLOGY.
HE SEEMS FRIENDLY ENOUGH, BRING HIM OVER HERE AND LET ME SEE HIM.
ANY IDEA WHAT HE IS? I THOUGHT ZATON IV HAD NO INDIGENOUS ANIMAL LIFE.
THIS SECTOR OF THE GALAXY IS STILL RATHER UNEXPLORED, CAPTAIN. IT'S POSSIBLE HE COULD...
LOOK!!
GLANDER
CHEE!
HE JUST JUMPED UP ON THE TABLE AND STARTED GRABBING FOR THE DICE! I THINK HE WANTS TO PLAY!!
HA HA HA!
NOOD
LET HIM. HE COULDN'T POSSIBLY BE ANY WORSE THAN YOU, SERPE.
WAIT-A-MINUTE YOU GUYS... HE THREW A DOUBLE THREE AND HE JUST MOVED A DOUBLE THREE.
EVERYTHING RIGHT.
NERD
THIS IS WIERD!
WHAT?!?
EXPLANATION ?
PERHAPS IT'S INSTINCTIVE TO HIS SPECIES... A NATURAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE MECHANICS OF THE GAME.
GRANDINETTI
SPALDING
STRANGER THINGS HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO HAPPEN.
SOMEONE SHOULD PLAY HIM A GAME OR TWO IN THE INTEREST OF SCIENCE. YOU KNOW, THE FIRST INTER-SPECIES BACKGAMMON TOURNAMENT TO DETERMINE THE CHAMPION OF THE UNIVERSE.
CHK! CHK!

LOOK AT THE SPARKLE IN HIS EYE. I THINK HE WANTS TO PLAY FOR MONEY.
IS THERE ANY OTHER WAY?
AND SO, PERHAPS THE STRANGEST GAME OF BACKGAMMON EVER PLAYED FOR MONEY BEGINS, WITH THE YOUNG MIDSHIPMEN STAKING THE ANIMAL FOR THE FIRST GAME..
IT IS NOT LONG BEFORE IT REACHES FOR THE DOUBLING CUBE.
HE'S DOUBLING YOU, CAPTAIN.
I CAN SEE THAT, MR. EDELMAN! I'M NOT WORRIED... I CAN STILL TAKE HIM!!
THEY PLAY FOR HOURS, TRANSFIXED, AND WITH EACH SUCCESSIVE GAME THE TINY FURRED CREATURE TURNS THE CUBE.
SIXTEEN.
THIRTY-TWO.
LET ME PLAY ONE MORE GAME, DAMN IT.!!
SPALDING
SIXTY-FOUR!
NO!!
HE'S CHEATING, HE'S GOT TO BE! I JUST HAVEN'T CAUGHT HIM AT IT YET, THAT'S ALL! I KNOW I CAN BEAT HIM IF CAN PLAY JUST ONE MORE GAME!!
YOU'VE LOST AGAIN, SIR. YOU'VE LOST EVERY-THING WE OWN.
I FEAR NOT. HE'S A MASTERFUL PLAYER.

ALRIGHT!! HE MAY HAVE DEFEATED ME AT SOME SILLY GAME, BUT I'M STILL THE CAPTAIN OF THIS VESSEL!
THROW HIM IN DETENTION! I WON'T HAVE AN ANIMAL RUNNING LOOSE ON MY SHIP!!
HIS SHIP, SIR. YOU LOST IT TO HIM IN THE LAST GAME.
100
I BET THE FARRAGUT? WHATEVER POSESSED ME TO DO THAT?
I THINK IT WAS WHEN YOU ROLLED THAT DOUBLE SIX NEAR THE END OF THE SEVENTH MATCH. YOU SEEMED DELERIOUS WITH GLEE AT THE TIME.
YOU'RE RIGHT. I REMEMBER NOW. I GUESS I JUST DIDN'T WANT TO ADMIT IT.
I KNOW, NOW, WHAT YOU ARE, PLASMA MONKEY. YOU ARE THE THE DEMON THE DYING MAN WARNED US OF... IT MUST HAVE BEEN HELL FOR THOSE POOR WRETCHES DOWN THERE, LOSING GAME AFTER GAME OF BACKGAMMON TO THE LIKES OF YOU.
LITTLE WONDER THEIR OUTPOST WAS DESTROYED.
YOU MEAN THEY WENT MAD AND TORE THEIR OWN CAMP APART?!?
PRECISELY, EDELMAN. FOR CENTURIES WE HAVE HELD THE MISTAKEN BELIEF THAT MAN WAS SUPREME IN THE COSMOS: OUR MORAL FIBRE, OUR SENSE OF DECENCY AND OUR ABILITY TO PLAY BACKGAMMON. THE TRUTH IS A BITTER PILL, INDEED. IT MUST HAVE BEEN HELL!
THE FARRAGUT IS YOURS, PLASMA MONKEY. DO WITH IT WHAT YOU WILL.

A FEW DAYS LATER.....
SENSORS SAY THAT THIS ONE'S STILL ALIVE, BUT JUST BARELY! WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME!
EXETER
THEN STOP TALKING AND GET HIM IN, MAN!
NO TIME... I'M DYING, I KNOW IT... JUST... BEWARE THE PLASMA MONKEYS!
WHAT IS IT? TELL US WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR CREW, CAPTAIN?
QUIET! HE'S TRYING TO TALK.
HE'S GASPING FOR AIR! GIVE HIM SOME ROOM!
NONE OF US ARE SAFE...
HE'S DEAD, SIR.
I'M NOT SURPRISED. HE'S BEEN FLOATING OUT IN SPACE FOR DAYS BY THE LOOKS OF THINGS, STILL, I WONDER WHAT HE MEANT BY THAT LAST REMARK...
"BEWARE THE PLASMA MONKEYS..."? THE POOR MAN MUST HAVE GONE MAD.
WHAT IS A PLASMA MONKEY ANYWAYS?
AHH, BUT YOU AND I KNOW, DON'T WE KIDDIES? THEY'RE THAT THING THAT HIDES IN THE DARK PLACES OF YOUR MIND. A LIVING REMINDER THAT MANKIND IS FLAWED IN SO VERY MANY WAYS.
SO, JUST REMEMBER THE NEXT TIME YOU'RE PLAYING BACKGAMMON WITH A SHORT, HAIRY FELLOW WHO DOESN'T SAY MUCH, KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON HIM...
...YOUR OPPONENT MAY WELL BE YOURSELF!!
YES, BEWARE THE PLASMA MONKEYS, MY CHILDREN, AND DON'T GO NEAR ZATON III. THEY DON'T KEEP THE PLACE UP, AND IT'S JUST AN AWFUL MESS.
THE END

STORY PENCILLED BY ANTHONY VAN BRUGGEN.

YECCH! THAT WAS PATHETIC! YOU'RE THE WORST MAN.
AND YOU'RE VERY RUDE.
YOU ARE GETTING THIS FOR FREE. Y'KNOW.
IT'S NOT LIKE CABLE TV.
I DON'T BUY THAT. FIREPLACES HOLD MY ATTENTION. IF WE DON'T OFFER CRITICAL ADVICE YOU MEMBERS OF THE SO-CALLED "CREATIVE SOCIETY" DON'T FEEL YOU HAVE TO WORK FOR OUR ATTENTION. ANYTHING BECOMES ENTERTAINMENT.
THAT MEAN I'VE GOT TO SIT HERE COMPLACENTLY AND LISTEN TO YOU? YOU ENTIRELY MADE UP THAT STORY ABOUT PLASMA MONKEYS! HOW DO I KNOW YOU DIDN'T INVENT THE OTHER STUFF?
YOU DON'T, I SUPPOSE. STILL, YOU CAN'T COMPLAIN. IT DID HOLD YOUR ATTENTION FOR A FEW MINUTES.
YOU WANT THE JEFFERSONS TO STAY ON THE AIR A FEW MORE YEARS?
OR THE A-TEAM?
THAT IS TERRIFYING. YOU'RE RIGHT.
DAMN RIGHT. WHY DON'T YOU GO BACK TO THE OLD STANDARDS... "I SAW MUNGO JERRY AND LIVED"?
OR "WA-HOOMA. THE BEASTIE THAT WALKED JUST LIKE A REGULAR GUY."
I DON'T MAKE DECISIONS LIKE THAT. THAT'S MORE EDITORIAL'S DEPARTMENT. I'M ONLY THE READER HERE, TRYING TO DO HIS JOB.
AND EARNING A MEAGRE WAGE. LET ME TELL YOU.

JOB?!?
YOU WORK FOR A LIVING?!?
EEEEK!
IT'S NOT PLEASANT, BUT, YES, I DO. I HAVE A WIFE AND KIDS TO SUPPORT.
A WIFE...?!?
TO SUPPORT?
RESPONSIBILITY?!?
SOMETHING THE MATTER? YOU SEEM A LITTLE PALE...
NOTHING! IT'S JUST THAT YOU STARTLED US A LITTLE WHEN YOU MENTIONED WORKING, THAT'S ALL.
AHH, I THINK I'VE FINALLY TOUCHED A RAW NERVE, HERE. TRY THESE ON... R.R.S.P.
DEFERRED PAYMENTS!
GET BACK, YOU GHOUL! YOU'RE SCARING THIS POOR GIRL!!
MORTGAGES.!! WRITING OFF YOUR DEPENDENTS ON INCOME TAX FORMS! DO I FRIGHTEN YOU, MY CHILDREN?
EEEEEAAAGH!!
QUICK! LET'S RUN AWAY.
YES, READERS, I SEEM TO HAVE FOUND WHAT REALLY SCARES THE YOUNGSTERS OF TODAY... GROWING UP AND GETTING A JOB IN THE REAL WORLD INSTEAD OF STAYING HOME TO SIT IN FRONT OF THE TELEVISION UNTILL YOU'RE FIFTY.
AND WHO SAYS THAT COMICS CAN'T STILL HAVE POIGNANT SOCIAL COMMENTS TO MAKE? DENNY O'NEIL, EAT YOUR HEART OUT.
AND GO GET A JOB, YA BUMS.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, STIG'S INFERNO IS
SOLD OUT?!?
WELL, IT'S A PUBLISHING TERM. IT MEANS ALL THE ISSUES WE GOT FROM THE DISTRIBUTOR HAVE BEEN PURCHASED AND SO, THE CURRENT ONE IS NO LONGER AVAILABLE IN A CONVENTIONAL RETAIL CAPACITY... SIR.
SUPERMAN
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EVIL

AN INSIDER'S VIEW

You don't have to be evil to read this but it doesn't get in the way. All you need is a little dissatisfaction with the namby-pamby, goody-good, fair society we live out of and you're ready for a life of *fun!*

This space wasn't free but the fool who usually draws the back cover trusted me to deliver the art to the printer. This is where evil takes hold. By the time he realizes, it will be too *late*.

I don't have anything to say except to expound my personal philosophy –

Glamour.

That's what I wanted. On the long days when I stared into the bathroom mirror, into the black, prehistoric basement of my conscience, I knew there was a party going on in there. It took a long time to relinquish my decent background; the coffee tables and croquet, but I had help along the way. Evil was *always* there pointing out ways to let my friends down, to cheat, lie, and connive. Evil was like a *she*, and the fascination I had for her was like a plunging neckline on my soul.

I left them, those that I had loved, as if they were broken toys. I left them for *her* and the immense satisfaction of knowing that I had *won* and I would *always* win.

I've had a lot of practice and I've come up with a few guidelines for those aspiring to evilness.

All you have to know is that [illegible] usually [illegible] for the Seven Deadly Sins [illegible] away the heart of a man and make him [illegible]. The incantations must be recited [illegible] the [illegible] has been [illegible], and [illegible] all does is see down to [illegible] by [illegible] can [illegible] know that [illegible] have been used they [illegible] the [illegible] body and the ashes buried in sacred ground where none may find the [illegible] to reach the [illegible] could mean certain death.

If [illegible] returns [illegible] he is [illegible] dismissed instantly in the manner prescribed. This is all-important [illegible] more than simply your life will be forfeit.

Now, these guys look awfully frightening but remember all the rewards which await you, close your eyes and repeat, "It's *worth* it, it's worth it, it's worth it."

Incidentally, don't forget to offer them all coffee and little baked treats or they might make you repeat the ceremony. Other than that, things should go pretty smoothly over all.

You needn't thank me for telling you all this, the havoc created shall be *my* reward.

They've tried to stop me before but *this* time I was too *smart* for them!